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SUBJECT: GERMANY: WESTERWELLE STRESSES CONTINUITY DURING
INTRODUCTORY CALL IN MOSCOW

REF: USNATO 00557

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor George Glass for reasons 1.

[1](#)4. (B) and (C).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The MFA sees FM Westerwelle's first trip to Moscow last month as a largely successful introductory call. The Russians probed for policy changes following the German elections. Although FM Lavrov seemed reassured that Berlin's Russia policy would remain unchanged, the MFA is questioning how committed the Russians are to reciprocating. Westerwelle encouraged both Medvedev and Lavrov to seize the opportunity that the U.S. reset policy offered, but neither responded; Westerwelle urged Medvedev not to publish his draft security treaty before the OSCE ministerial, but Medvedev did just that nine days later. Lavrov probed Westerwelle on removal of U.S. tacnukes. Despite tensions, the MFA is quick to stress the important, close relationship Berlin has with Moscow while admitting ruefully that Russians are "hard bargainers, heavy maintenance, and hold grudges." During his visit, Westerwelle appears largely to have stayed on message with our positions (specifically, our positions on the NRC, the proposed European Security Treaty, Iran, and the "reset button"), but sadly came away without concrete results. End Summary.

OFFERING REASSURANCES OF RUSSIA'S IMPORTANCE

[1](#)2. (C) Lavrov repeatedly probed Westerwelle, according to MFA Division Head for Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus Reichel. Lavrov had been well-briefed on the new German government's coalition agreement, and was looking for any indication of significant change in German policy. Lavrov asked why the coalition agreement did not mention the bilateral "strategic partnership" Germany has with Russia. Westerwelle assured him that Germany continued to see the relationship as significant "across the board." Westerwelle acknowledged the important strategic role Russia played in Europe and with regard to German interests. Lavrov then turned briefly to the German-Russian economic partnership, and Westerwelle once again assured him that the new government would continue the close relationship in support of Russian modernization. Specifically, Lavrov was "relieved" that Northstream finally appeared ready to move forward, given the recent Swedish approval, and hoped he could continue to rely on German support. Finally, Lavrov said PM Putin's agreement with Ukrainian PM Tymoschenko provided an "assurance that there would be no interruptions of gas this winter."

QUESTIONING WHAT GERMANY REALLY MEANS TO RUSSIA

[1](#)3. (C) Turning the tables, Westerwelle looked for and failed to receive clarification on Russian intentions regarding the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) and the Russian proposed text for a new European security treaty. Lavrov assured Westerwelle that Russia was "enthusiastic about NATO SecGen Rasmussen's approach to NATO-Russia cooperation." (Note: Berlin was later perplexed when Moscow proved to be so difficult in the

run-up to the December 4 NRC ministerial on negotiating the "Taking the NRC Forward" document.) When questioned about the purpose of the new security treaty and why Europe even needed a new treaty, Lavrov snapped that it had never been a secret: Russia's core objective is a legally binding reaffirmation of the principle of indivisibility of security in Europe with a consultation mechanism to use when one party thinks this principle has been violated. Medvedev informed Westerwelle that he had a draft treaty and was ready to table it for discussion. Westerwelle urged Lavrov not to, accurately predicting that circulating a text just prior to the December 1-2 OSCE ministerial would throw the OSCE into disarray. Westerwelle said Germany could not support such a move. (Note: Moscow subsequently did this on November 29, disregarding Westerwelle's suggestion.)

IRAN

14. (C) Lavrov's comments on Iran were "encouraging," and he described the "general picture in Iran as very alarming." Moscow is disappointed about the negative answers regarding the Tehran Research Reactor following the October 8 Vienna decision to ship LEU to Moscow. Moreover, Moscow is "disappointed that Tehran pulled back from the E3 plus 3 plus 1 meeting." The only positive development is that the Qom inspection occurred.

15. (C) Lavrov confirmed that Moscow is "not opposed to sanctions but had three caveats." First, the UNSC must be the venue for sanctions deliberations. Second, if UNSC sanctions were agreed, they could not be supplemented by unilateral sanctions by the EU or others. Finally, sanctions

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in the nuclear sector have been exhausted, and the UNSC needed to pursue another area, perhaps the financial sector. However, Moscow would not support sanctions that target the general population (making fuel sanctions, for example, unacceptable). In an aside, Lavrov expressed his opposition to the proposal that the Turks take custody of the LEU vice direct transfer to Russia. During Westerwelle's conversation with Medvedev on Iran, Medvedev reiterated that he was more concerned about North Korea than Iran and hoped the international community would react in a strong, united fashion.

RUSSIAN TROOP EXERCISES

16. (C) Lavrov used Westerwelle's criticism of the September Russian-Belarusian troop exercises to put in a plug for Russia's efforts to reform the Vienna Document of 1999. Responding to Westerwelle's reminder that transparency was crucial to offset misperceptions of military exercises, Lavrov argued that military attaches stationed in Moscow were invited, but that additional observers from capitals could not be invited because of limits in the Vienna Document of 1999. Lavrov pointed out that if the Vienna Document already had been revised as proposed by Russia, more observers could have been invited.

TACTICAL NUKES AND THE CFE TREATY

17. (C) Lavrov pressed for an explanation of Westerwelle's stance on the U.S. stationing of tactical nuclear weapons in Germany. Westerwelle quickly confirmed that their removal was his goal, but that such a step could only be achieved "with the consensus of NATO." Referencing the coalition agreement once more, Lavrov said "Russia always had wanted" the ratification of an amended CFE Treaty, and hoped the May 5 Russian aide-memoire on "re-balancing" the parallel actions package would be discussed in a multilateral forum similar to Berlin's June 2009 CFE seminar.

COMMENT

18. (C) Given that Westerwelle at every opportunity stressed

the continuity of German policy and did not raise any human rights cases or issues during his meetings with Medvedev and Lavrov, it is unlikely that we will see any significant change from the previous German policy toward Russia that sought to minimize potential points of conflict. However, the MFA was disconcerted over the mixed signals between Moscow and its mission in Brussels regarding NRC negotiations, and Medvedev's decision to release its proposed European security treaty text before the OSCE Ministerial. Based on Westerwelle's first trip to Moscow, we are questioning how dedicated the Russians are to cooperating with the new foreign minister. Westerwelle appears to have pushed policies in agreement with our positions, but came away empty handed. End Comment.

MURPHY